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EFFECTS OF LITERATURE UPON THE PEOPLE.

In a country like our own, where the highest offices in the gift of the nation are open to all, without any discrimination of rank or title or hereditary distinction, it is natural that the means of gaining influence should be eagerly sought for by a large body of the people. Wealth, under all forms of government, under monarchies, aristocracies, democracies, and republics, is a powerful instrument in the hands of its possessor for gaining and securing to him a strong ascendancy over the minds of his fellow subjects. The philosopher in his speculations, the poet in his dreams and visions, and sometimes the poor man in his discontent, may disclaim the power which the opulent exercise; but all are equally ready to bend before it, whenever circumstances place them within the reach of its action. Under republican governments, wealth seems to invest a man with more than an ordinary share of power and authority. The administration of the laws being supported by a tax proportional to the amount of property under the control of the individual, of course the wealthy are compelled to bear the principal part of the burthen. Thus they are looked up to as the *pillars of the state*, and receive a degree of respect and possess a degree of influence, entirely independent of their personal merit. Not that personal merit is by any means disregarded; for when-

ever there is a remarkable deficiency in this respect, not all the wealth of Crœsus can secure a wide and lasting esteem. The characters of all are subject to examination; and if any individual is able to come from the ordeal of public scrutiny with a passable reputation for virtue, uprightness, and integrity, he will enjoy the confidence of others, and this confidence will be increased and his rank in society will be more elevated, provided that in addition to these merits of character, he possesses the solid and shining merit of a splendid fortune.

Another instrument of power, which is much talked of, though the application of it is not always understood, is knowledge. But it too often happens, that a knowledge of the arts of intrigue, a skilful use of the complicated machinery set in motion by political cunning to answer selfish ends, a perfect acquaintance with all the disguises and artifices that man can assume in winding his way through a maze of stratagems, until he at last attains to the object of his aspirations,—it too often happens that this passes in the eyes of the world for genuine and praiseworthy knowledge. There is another kind of knowledge of a true and solid nature, by which the fortunes of individuals may be honestly and honorably forwarded—a knowledge of the proper adaptation of means to ends, a knowledge of the phenomena of nature, a knowledge of the results of experience, a knowledge of the past and of the principles of judging the future from the past. This is certainly of the highest importance to every individual in every community, and accordingly we find that all institutions for the education of the great body of the people, make this their main object. Those sticklers for the ignorance of the people who have sometimes come forward with their croaking predictions, especially in England, are unworthy to be ranked among civilized and enlightened men. They live in an age too late for them. They should have lived, and died too, in an age of political ignorance and papal superstition. Their eyes are not fit to gaze upon the broad blaze of knowledge that is already beginning to illumine the world with its brightness, and that soon will shed abroad among all nations a radiance and splendor beyond aught that has yet been witnessed. Passing over the importance of this kind of practical knowledge to the great body of the people, under the

conviction that no man in his right mind will enter the lists to dispute it, let us devote a few pages to a brief consideration of the favorable influence that knowledge of a less practical but more elegant kind might be made to exert upon that part of the community which is generally placed without the reach of its power.

It has sometimes been supposed, that the cultivation of letters and the fine arts is incompatible with national virtue and national prosperity; that it undermines that firmness of character and steadiness of resolve which are necessary elements in the constitution of a society destined to perpetuate its existence. Painting, architecture, sculpture, literature, luxury, have often been supposed to unite in the destruction of public virtue, in the prostration of morals, in the promotion and dissemination of corrupt principles, in tainting the sanctuary of private life with the ruinous influence of dissolute habits, in short, in setting in operation all the causes that by a secret yet certain process, work upon the vitals of society, until its vigor is impaired and its life destroyed. Greece, in the height of her literary glory, while the eloquent appeals of her orators were still sounding in the ears of the people, while the splendid conceptions of the poet were still addressed to their imagination, and the elegant monuments of her artists met their eyes wherever they turned, while the memory of heroes, and patriots, and sages, was continually placed before them in the consecrated page of the bard and the beautiful speculations of the philosopher, in the midst of every thing that could animate bravery, inspire enthusiasm, enkindle the fervor of patriotism, awaken and keep alive a love of liberty, and an unchanging hatred of tyranny, in the midst of every thing that could nurture a love of letters, and cherish the noblest sentiments and most exalted feelings, every thing that could give a high tone of character to the community, every thing that could impart correctness and refinement to taste and purity to morals, Greece yet became abject and degraded; she yet sunk beneath the iron power of a foreign master, almost without a struggle to ennoble her fall.

While Rome was ignorant and unlettered, she was prosperous and happy. In the early periods of her national existence, she received the devoted and patriotic attachment of her children. Victory followed her standard, and surround-

ing nations obeyed and reverenced her voice. But as soon as the refined arts of polished Greece attracted the attention and employed the time of the stern and hardy Romans, their firmness of character began to decline. The influence of letters, it is said, opened the way for the introduction of luxury and all its attendant evils. Literature and the refinements of elegant society were carried to their highest perfection, at the very time when all that was valuable and worthy of admiration in the Roman character had yielded before the enervating power of a luxurious despotism. After the republic had been convulsed by the civil wars, Augustus secured himself upon the throne of the Roman world. To gain the approbation of his contemporaries and to transmit his name with honor to posterity, he took into favor the distinguished literary men of his age; and they certainly were not deficient in repaying by their polished flattery the debt they owed to their imperial master. From this moment, it is said, may be dated the decline of the Roman empire.

In these cases, as in all cases of the kind, other causes may be traced out, which tended to produce a national decline, rather than any influence that literature and the arts could possibly exercise. It needs but a slight acquaintance with the history of ancient Greece, to find the origin of her decline in causes far more efficacious and destructive. The intestine divisions, civil wars, political disturbances, which shook Greece to her centre at almost every period of her existence as a nation, the unsettled nature of the governments of the several states, the insecurity of person and property, the danger which men, eminent for their genius, wealth, or public character, were exposed to, of losing their lives, their fortunes, and their stations as citizens, these, with others less distinct in their operation, are sufficient to account for the fact, that Greece bowed before the overwhelming power of Rome. It would seem ridiculous to make the arts and letters bear any portion of the sin which the whole tenor of history clearly proves cannot justly be laid to their charge.

Rome, it is true, in her infancy and youth, was ignorant and warlike. Her devotion to the arts of war spread her victories far and wide. Her historians have celebrated the virtues that characterized her early existence. But are we cer-

tain that the outward splendor of Roman triumphs can be taken as an index of national happiness and prosperity? Had the early Romans been led to imbibe a taste for the refining arts of civilized life, they would have had much less occasion to meddle with the affairs of surrounding nations. They would have been taught that it is not the stern qualities of the warrior, the coolness of the hardened soldier in shedding blood, the indifference of the toil-worn veteran to human suffering, that constitute a character truly estimable and worthy of admiration. They would certainly have learnt that the true prosperity of their country was not to be promoted by the ruin of others, and that Roman greatness was not to be established on the wreck of a conquered world. Look at the history of the Roman republic, and say when private individual happiness was to any great extent enjoyed. The people were continually harassed by divisions and broils. Their rights were imperfectly understood, and still more imperfectly enjoyed. Faction and misrule, ignorance and ambition, formed a motley combination against the true enjoyment of individual or national happiness. The military spirit, which first gave an impulse to Roman enterprize, led in the course of time to a perfect mania, and though it may be considered as the moving principle of what is called the prosperity of this great nation, it may with equal justice be considered the leading cause of her downfall. Had she been contented with the natural increase of national growth, had she been taught the true principles which ought to guide a patriotic people, instead of cherishing a selfish and unprincipled disregard to the rights of others, had she devoted the vigor of her early genius and the experience of her maturer age to the cultivation of the arts that adorn humanity, had poetry, oratory, philosophy, painting, architecture, and sculpture employed only a *part* of those energies which were wasted in violating the rights of man and spreading devastation over the face of the earth, Rome might, perhaps, have still existed, a noble and imposing monument of the preserving power of literature, science, and the arts. It was not the corrupting influence of Grecian letters that subverted the Roman empire. It was not the luxury attendant upon refinement of manners, and cultivation of taste, and fondness for literature, and attachment to studious retirement, and dislike for the la-

bours and fatigues of war, that destroyed the foundation of public virtue, and produced a ruinous abandonment of principle, which ended in the entire prostration of Roman power and glory. This was only the ornamental drapery that was spread over the surface, but the principle of decay had long existed and was deeply fixed within. Literature and the arts came quite too late to exert a redeeming power upon the sickly and declining constitution of the Roman world. They were too contracted and straitened in their influence. They were too much under the protection of Rome's imperial masters. They were too much the language of courtly adulation, instead of being the free and unrestrained expression of national or individual feeling. To say that culture and refinement undermined public and private virtue, and hastened the downfal of public prosperity, because they could not prevent it, is just as absurd, as to declare that the physician is guilty of murder, because he is called upon too late to stay the progress of disease and save the life of the patient.

In modern times, the most distinguished eras of literature have been when princes and monarchs have taken it under the protection of royal patronage. When luxury has most generally prevailed, it is said that literature has been carried to its highest perfection. Scholars and poets were honored at the luxurious court of Louis XIV. This period has been called the Augustan age of France. If then it is a good thing for the prosperity of a nation to have a taste for letters prevail, why did not the splendid literature of France at this period save her from the embarrassments she soon fell into? It is true that the court of the French king was adorned by many luminaries of literature. It is true, too, that the resources of France became almost exhausted, and that the latter part of this reign, which has so often been considered the most glorious era in French history, was darkened by the gathering clouds of misfortune. But why attribute any part of the calamity to letters? It is probable that if letters had received the attention which their importance demands and deserves, if Louis had felt the influence of literary refinement upon his mind and character, his attention would not have been occupied so much with schemes of aggrandizement, which led to the exhaustion of the power and treasures of France. He patronized letters, not because he had a true feeling of their

excellence and importance, but because he was ambitious of gaining every kind of distinction, which could shed a glory round his name, and make his court the seat of splendor and magnificence. While poets were writing works that were destined to be afterwards viewed as *chef d'œuvres* in literature, Louis was employed in destructive wars abroad, or in the enjoyment of the pleasures of luxury at home. The excesses, into which his ambition and extravagance led him, were abundantly sufficient to produce all the embarrassments which destroyed the tranquillity of the latter part of his life. Here, too, literature was not quite what it should be. It was finished and elegant and courtly; it was polished and refined and delicate; but it depended too much on the conventions of society. The strength of native feeling was too much restrained by the fastidious refinement of courtly circles, and the glow and animation that spring from the heart and that reach the heart, were cooled down by the effects of a dogmatical criticism. It was not the literature of the nation, but the literature of the court. We may study it with pleasure and improvement, but it can never awaken in us that deep and heartfelt interest, which a literature founded less on convention and dogmas, and more on feeling and nature, is capable of exciting.

In no instance recorded on the pages of history can it be shown, that letters have had any influence in promoting national decay. Wherever a want of morality, a decline of public virtue, and a failure of national prosperity have been contemporaneous with a perfect cultivation of literature, science, and the arts, the former can never be considered the effects of the latter. A little attention to the history of nations will enable any one to trace out, without much difficulty other causes of a different nature. And even suppose it were true that in the instances we have considered, letters could have produced such effects as have sometimes been assigned to them, it would by no means prove that a *diffusion* of literary taste would end in such deadly consequences. The experiment has never yet been made. Literary culture has always been confined to a very small number, even in the most refined communities. It has been produced by the fostering care of patronage, and driven forward beyond its natural growth, or else it has been confined to solitary individuals.

and never extended its influence over the whole face of society.

It is universally allowed that no people, taken as a body, are so well instructed as the American public. All men in our country take a lively interest in whatever relates to the affairs of government. The political measures of the day are not only discussed in the polished circles of the city, but are examined and their merits decided upon in the remotest villages. The freedom that all classes enjoy and the opportunities in each individual's power of gaining wealth and influence, operate in urging upon every member of the community the importance of acquiring that knowledge, which may be turned to account in forwarding these purposes. This, no doubt, is the happy influence of our free and republican institutions, but like all other human things, it is attended with some serious evils. It too often leads to an entire disregard of every thing that may not be practically made use of in forwarding what are conceived to be the most important objects of life; it makes us attach too much consequence to the arts of accumulating wealth; it leads us to view letters as a luxury which we have but very little to do with; it often results in creating political animosity, and calling forth disputes upon questions that are of no consequence to the nation or the individual. Every class in the community can devote no inconsiderable portion of time to objects other than the manual labors of their daily avocations, and it is very natural that their attention should be directed to whatever most frequently comes within their view. As the political papers of the day are every where dispersed, these of course are universally perused, and the influence they possess over the minds of the people is almost unbounded. But the principal topics that are discussed in these works are of a political nature: and thus our public institutions and most of the presses in the country tend strongly to give a political turn to the modes of thinking and reasoning throughout the whole community. But if something more of literary taste could be mingled with this prevailing inclination of the American public, we cannot but think the result would be highly beneficial. Private happiness and true public prosperity, which are always united, would receive immense accessions from such a combination. In some parts of our country, the effects of a taste for elegant

letters among the people have been sufficiently seen, to warrant us in saying, that the farther this taste can be extended, the better. *It would increase the private happiness of individuals.* The little troubles that disturb the happiness of mankind, in the shades of private life, would vanish before the happy influence of elegant literature. The objects that are presented to the contemplation of him whose mind has been opened to the beauty of the divine productions of poetry, and has been led to reflection by the instructive pages of history, are of such a high and noble nature, that they cannot but take away the sting of adversity, and raise him above the influence of the common vexations of life. The toils by which we are all obliged to provide, if not for our livelihood, at least for our happiness, would become only pleasing recreations to diversify the scenes of our existence, could they always be combined with the delights of literary culture. Let it not be said that a taste for reading would produce a dislike for the common labors of life. Let it not be said that a man must be excluded from the joys of intellectual refinement, in order to make himself useful in a sphere where it is necessary to exert manual labor, and to endure bodily fatigue, for a subsistence. This is all a mere scarecrow erected by those who believe in their hearts, though they would be ashamed and afraid to avow such a belief, that the people must be *kept under* by ignorance. It is another shape of the doctrine that belongs to an age of intellectual darkness and spiritual tyranny, the abominable doctrine, that *knowledge is dangerous*, dangerous to the interests of the state. It doubtless *is* dangerous to the existence of bigotry and despotism, but it is safe, perfectly safe, for virtue, freedom, and happiness. Perhaps it is true, that many who now grope through life in the shades of obscurity, would quit their humble condition and work their way upwards to honor, wealth, and distinction, could they once be made to feel the powers which the God of Nature has endowed them with. But this is not a very fearful consequence. None but the weak and stupid, who are afraid that the accidental advantages of fortune and family will be thrown into the shade by the superior splendor of intellectual endowments, and the untiring assiduity of genius, determined to exert its energies in accomplishing brilliant achievements, will ever have the folly to advance *this* as a proof of

the danger of extending a taste for science and literature to every individual of every rank in life. No one can doubt that many would be brought forward by this very means, whose powers are well adapted to produce extensive and lasting benefits, the influence of which would not be confined to the present age, but might reach to generations yet to come.

It would increase the public prosperity. It would inspire the people with a greater liberality of sentiment, it would strike at the root of prejudice and banish from the face of society, that narrowness of feeling which contracts the mind, perverts the judgment, takes away from the joys of social existence, and connects the differences of opposing opinions with bitterness of spirit, rancor, and acrimony. It would present a common object, on which all could agree and where all could sympathize. It would be a bond of union, connecting by its gentle and unobtrusive influence all the different parts of the community, softening down the rugged features that too often deform the aspect of society, drawing forth from its retirement that merit which deserves to occupy a high seat in the temple of fame, but is kept from its rightful possession by the depressing weight of poverty and misfortune, soothing the cares and sorrows and troubles that now, perhaps, have nothing to alleviate them, and exerting an ennobling and purifying power over the morals and character of all. That the destiny of America is to realize such a blissful condition, will not be looked upon as an extravagant hypothesis by those who have traced the steps of our national advancement, and examined the probabilities of our future progress. Though such an era is still wrapped in the darkness of the future, yet we look forward with confidence to the period of its arrival. Every American must hail with rapture the dawn of so glorious a day, and the object of every patriot's efforts and aspirations should be, to hasten the coming of its meridian splendor.

C. C.

BATTLE OF LEXINGTON.

> And wild and high the Cameron's gathering rose,
> The war-note of Lochiel, that Albion's hills
> Have heard; and heard too have her Saxon foes,
> How in the noon of night that pibroch thrills—
>
> *Byron.*

WHOEVER, for the first time, may chance to pass through the village of Lexington cannot but be impressed with a sort of local awe as he approaches the field where the first blood was shed, in one of the greatest revolutions the world ever saw. Of a still summer afternoon, the New Hampshire waggoner is often seen turning off from the road, with his whip in his hand, to read the inscription on the monument, of which he has just caught a glimpse among the trees. He enters the enclosure with awakening attention. The tranquillity of the spot, the vicinity of the church, with which the green common is connected, and the bordering trees which cast their lengthening shadows on the granite pillar, conspire to solemnize the scene and open the mind of the stranger to a deep impression, as his eye catches the first lines of the inscription—

> "Sacred to liberty and the rights of mankind,
> The freedom and independence of America!"

A thrilling interest arises in his mind, as he proceeds to the names of the simple yeomen, who gave up their lives on that momentous occasion, and are sleeping in the dust beneath his feet. His thoughts recur involuntarily to the alarming scene of war, which burst out upon that field, sending horror and grief into the hearts of the inexperienced cottagers. Imagination pictures the ghastly countenances of the slain, and he seems to hear the wild shout of the conquerors, whose bayonets are reeking in their blood. He looks round for some loitering villager to give him an account of the place or battle, no circumstance of which, however trivial, but he will listen to with eagerness.

The rural town of Lexington contains less than 2000 inhabitants, yet it possesses peculiar characteristics, which render it in some measure worthy to be the scene of the great

event, which distinguished it. All its citizens are agriculturists. Even in the earliest period of its history, before it became a township, when this old town of Cambridge swallowed up all the neighboring territory, it was known by the name of "Cambridge Farms." This characteristic, joined with a healthy competence and equal distribution of property, led from its very settlement to principles of independence and liberty. This place has always been highly republican and patriotic; and considering its vicinity to the metropolis and other confused trading towns, singularly distinguished for a universal equality of rank in society, and freedom from that offscouring of the human race, which loiter about the heels of the wealthy.

It is well known what excitement prevailed and spread unopposed among a social and united people, while the British troops were stationed in Boston, antecedent to the breaking out of the revolutionary war. Our fathers had time to consider what they were about to attempt, and to fortify their minds with cool determination. Children gathered closely around their parents; mothers grew pale for apprehension, but our fathers beheld them with a quiet though firm and unshaken aspect. They beheld the gathering of mighty clouds, whose effects they could not wholly foresee, yet the language of their hearts was, "Let it come." "The air of this wide, romantic land breathes liberty. The wolf and the catamount of our forest, and the bison-robed Indian have taught it to us. Our ancestors marked not their age with the character of adventure, and ploughed not the distant ocean, to plant us here in servitude."

At dead of the night which preceded the battle of Lexington, 800 British genadiers and regulars leaped silently into boats, crossed over Charles River bay to Lechmere Point, and with great wariness and expedition, struck across through bushes and marsh-mud to gain the high road, which led to Lexington and Concord. But the vigilant colonists were not unapprized of their motions. As soon as a regular had leapt into a boat, a fleet horse was in the wind to carry the alarm into the country. Suddenly, the sleeping hills re-echoed to the clang of the church-bell; shrill war-notes whistled among the vallies, and the gloominess of night gave wild presentiment of more gloomy reality. Then was the time for

the dark spirit to arouse its sleeping energies. The cottager awakes, and fancies that he already hears the clang of arms and the ruthless shout of the fierce grenadier, as he rushes to sheath his bayonet in the bodies of his wife and children. He springs from his couch, buckles on his leathern girdles, already supplied with the ammunition of death, and grasps his faithful musket; then turning to cast a look, perhaps the last, upon his wife and children, their faces pale with emotion and more anxious for him than themselves, strengthen the nerves of his resolution. They cling to him; he conjures them to be quiet, and he will defend them, and rushes from his cottage.

The drum is heard, which calls him to the field. By the light of the moon he hastens thither. The night is still again —no sound of the enemy is heard—an awful suspense ensues. Soon, however, horses' hoofs are heard—a breathless courier arrives announcing the near approach of 1500 of the enemy. And what could fifty militia yeomen, drawn up in battle array on the field of Lexington, think of doing with 1500 British infantry, by thus boldly intercepting their progress, while not another one of their countrymen had taken up arms or ever shed a drop of English blood? What but an utter recklessness of life, an enthusiastic ardor to be the first in their country's defence, a mad determination to thwart the first encroachment of tyranny, heightened by the midnight scene and the sudden outrage of a mercenary foe, could have induced them to take such a stand? Yet it was well. Now that the mighty struggle is over, which made us free, we applaud such ready and Spartan spirit; such promptness and daring in our fathers to go forward and resist, like the band of Leonidas, the first approaches of oppression.

Parker, their captain, charged them to keep their ground and not give the first fire. "Let us not," says he, "begin the quarrel; but if they will have war, here let it be determined. Let them prick a vein of us, if they dare. Should we fall, it is in no common cause; on no trifling occasion. We shall be revenged." The enemy were now within 100 rods, and their bright arms were just seen glimmering in the moonlight. They had heard the war-drum of the villagers, halted, charged their pieces, and were now coming up in double-quick time. What could have been their thoughts on thus discov-

ering this handful of yeomen quietly drawn up in silent and motionless array on the open field to meet them, notwithstanding all the wariness and expedition of their march from the metropolis under cover of the night? The enemy came up shouting to within ten rods of the unshrinking villagers. "Disperse, you rebels!" bellowed out the English colonel, with opprobrious appellations, firing his pistol at them, brandishing his broad-sword, and in the same breath ordering his foremost ranks to fire. The first platoon fired over the heads of the villagers, who still remained silent and undismayed. A second more general discharge was made directly among them. Seven Americans fell to the earth. The rest broke and dispersed with a retreating fire, which, however, only wounded a few of the enemy. The British kept up their fire as long as they could see one to fire at.

"After the first fire," says J. Munroe, one of the surviving villagers, "I thought, and so stated to E. Munroe, who stood next to me on the left, that they had fired nothing but powder; but on the second firing, M. said, that they had fired something more than powder, for he had received a wound in his arm; and now, said he, 'I'll give them the contents of my gun.' We then both took aim at the main body of the British troops,—the smoke prevented our seeing anything but the heads of some of their horses—and discharged our pieces. After the second fire of the British troops, I distinctly saw J. Parker struggling on the ground, with his gun in his hand, apparently attempting to load it. In this situation, the British came up, run him through with the bayonet, and killed him on the spot. After I had fired the first time, I retreated about ten rods, and then loaded my gun a second time with two balls; and on firing at the British, the strength of the charge took off about a foot of my gun-barrel." (Hist. Battle at Lexington by E. Phinney.) The conquerors, on gaining the field and thus opening the flood-gates of the revolutionary war, drew up on the battle ground, fired a volley, and gave three huzzas, and soon after were on the highway again for Concord. The villagers closed warily upon their rear, and made prisoners of six regulars, who loitered behind.

On the return of the enemy from Concord, in the afternoon of the same day, the vanquished villagers had completely rallied, and with the yeomanry of all the surrounding

towns, took them at much better advantage than in the morning, plying them in flank and rear from stone-wall ramparts, and the trunks of trees, in the true Indian style. Their fire was continual and deadly, yet would have been much more so, had not Lord Percy reinforced the enemy from Boston, with one thousand men and some field-pieces. These now roared against the Americans. Houses were pillaged and in flames, and women and children hurried away to the woods. The royal forces collected on a commanding hill about a mile below the church, recruited themselves there, and by night succeeded in reaching Bunker-hill. Forty-nine Americans fell in this battle, and sixty-five of the British. It was not great in profusion of blood, but only for the occasion, on which it was fought, and the circumstances which attended it.

It has been said by one of our first orators, that, when our country shall have grown mightier in future times, and national history shall have poured out its tomes, and the dusk of antiquity shall have begun to gather round and consecrate the leading events of her earliest establishment, when our children's children shall have multiplied, this battle will be compared to that of the Spartans of Leonidas, and Lexington and Thermopylæ will be pronounced together. But, although this may be too much for the present, even in the warmest panegyrics of the offspring of the patriots, who fell on this occasion, yet there is certainly a similarity in the two events.

The British foe did not indeed equal the millions of Xerxes, yet came like them from a distant country to enslave a free people, who were inferior to them in wealth and numbers. Leonidas and his little band marched forth boldly and alone to battle, first to resist the mighty intruder and give him a sample of the freeborn character of those he was about to cope with. These heroes made a bloodier and longer resistance against the proud invaders than the yeomanry of Lexington, yet they were enabled to do so from the peculiar advantage of their situation in a narrow pass, while the latter met their foe in the open fields. Leonidas and his band were all slain except one man; and if Parker and his band of yeomen were not all strewed upon their native soil, it was not that they did not sufficiently expose themselves, were not sufficiently daring, or that the bright bayonets, which were levelled against their unshrinking ranks, were not suffi-

ciently numerous, or that the bullets, which whistled about their ears, were not sufficiently plentiful. Some of the veterans, who composed this remarkable band, are yet living with their offspring upon the soil, which they then so bravely defended. I have often listened to the tales of this and other scenes of revolutionary warfare. There is one very old lady, living now in the same bevel-roofed house, on the highway to Concord, about a mile above the village, which she dwelt in on the day of the battle, who has often amused me with an account of her adventures on that occasion. I do not mention her in context with those ageworn veterans to diminish aught of their martial character, but merely to illustrate a little further the scene in which they acted.

"I heard the guns," says she, "at about day-break, but being unapprehensive of danger, did not, like most of our neighbors, move off for fear of the enemy; especially as my father was confined to his bed of a severe sickness, so that in fleeing from the house we must leave him behind, which I could not consent to. Our domestics had already absconded, we knew not whither. I, therefore, and my husband, who, on account of a certain indisposition, was incapacitated for military service, remained in the house with our father, while the enemy passed; which they did without offering us any injury. I remember well, their exact order, red coats, glittering arms, and appalling numbers. Some time after, on their arrival at Concord, a report of musketry was once more heard, and in broken and incessant volleys. It was a sound of death to us. All now was trepidation, fever, and rushing to arms; women and children bewildered and scouring across the fields. With much ado, we succeeded in yoking our oxen and getting father on his bed into an ox-cart, and thus moving him off as carefully as we could to a neighbor's house, at some distance from the highway, on which we expected the enemy to return. Before leaving our house, I secured some of the most valuable of my effects, putting my large looking-glass between two featherbeds, and fastening all the windows and doors. The house we carried father to, had been already vacated, and here I was left alone with him. The dreadful sound of approaching guns was still ringing in my ears. Bewildered and affrighted, I betook myself into the house-cellar there to await my fate. Occasionally, I ventured to peep out to dis-

cover the approach of the enemy. After remaining some time in this dreadful state of fear and suspense, I at last discovered the enemy coming down a long hill on the highway, partly upon a run and in some confusion, being closely beset by 'our men' in flank and rear. The terrific array of war soon came fully into view, and as soon passed off again from before my eyes, like a horrid vision, leaving only a cloud of smoke behind and the groans of the dying, who were strewed in its wake.

'After the rattle of musketry had grown somewhat weaker from distance, and my heart became more relieved of its apprehensions, I resolved to return home. But what an altered scene began to present itself, as I approached the house—garden walls thrown down—my flowers trampled upon—earth and herbage covered with the marks of hurried footsteps. The house had been broken open, and on the door-step—awful spectacle—there lay a British soldier dead, on his face, though yet warm, in his blood, which was still trickling from a bullet-hole though his vitals. His bosom and his pockets were stuffed with my effects, which he had been pillaging, having broken into the house through a window. On entering my front room, I was horror-struck. Three mangled soldiers lay groaning on the floor and weltering in their blood, which had gathered in large puddles about them. "Beat out my brains, I beg of you," cried one of them, a young Briton, who was dreadfully pierced with bullets, through almost every part of his body, "and relieve me from this agony." You will die soon enough, said I, with a revengeful pique. A grim Irishman, shot through the jaws, lay beside him, who mingled his groans of desperation with curses on the villain who had so horridly wounded him. The third was a young American, employing his dying breath in prayer. A bullet had passed through his body, taking off in its course the lower part of his powder-horn. The name of this youthful patriot was J. Haywood, of Acton. His father came and carried his body home; it now lies in Acton graveyard. These were the circumstances of his death: being ardent and close in the pursuit, he stopped a moment at our well to slake his thirst. Turning from the well, his eye unexpectedly caught that of the Briton, whom I saw lying dead on the door-step, just coming from the house with his plunder. They were

about a rod from each other. The Briton knew it was death for him to turn, and the American scorned to shrink. A moment of awful suspense ensued—when both simultaneously levelled their muskets at each other's heart, fired, and fell on their faces together. My husband drew the two Britons off on a sled, and buried them in one of our pastures, where they now lie, beneath a pine tree which has grown up out of their grave. The Irishman was the only one of the three that survived.' X.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

Biography has always been considered one of the most pleasant branches of literature. There is nothing more delightful than to follow an individual who has been distinguished in the political or literary world, through the adventures that have diversified his life. The history of a great nation is grand and imposing and instructive. We love to follow the fortunes of a rising people, from the weakness of national infancy and childhood, through all the progressive stages of its advancement, until it arrives at almost universal dominion; and there is something singularly mournful and impressive, in contemplating its downfall and decay. But here our feelings are not so directly interested, as in the less important adventures of individuals. Our sympathies are at once enlisted, and we follow the course of their lives, almost with the anxiety and earnestness of personal friendship. We do, indeed, become in a manner acquainted with them. Their characters and thoughts are laid open to our view, and inspire us with a feeling, somewhat approaching to that of personal acquaintance. With what mingled emotions of curiosity and interest do we trace the progress of such men as Burke and Pitt and Sheridan, and such scholars as Johnson and Sir William Jones? It is a sublime spectacle, to behold the strength of intellectual power, struggling with the pressure of adversity, and at last rising in its might and taking possession of that high station which it was originally destined to fill; and it is a beautiful and interesting one, to follow the man, whose eloquence or learning has commanded the admiration of a great people, to the shades of retirement, and to find there the exhibition of the milder virtues of private

life, which are less striking and commanding, indeed, but which more readily engage our affections, than those splendid qualities that are necessary to adorn a high official station. Burke's commanding and resistless eloquence fills us with delight and astonishment, and we look up with distant reverence to that wonderful mind, which was capable of wielding an instrument so powerful and overwhelming. But we love him and feel a deepened interest in everything that concerns him, when we hear him tenderly lamenting the death of a son, on whom his fondest hopes so long had rested. It is then that he addresses himself to feelings that are universal, and our hearts at once respond to the touching appeal.

The narrative of the lives of such men as Johnson, is not only alluring but instructive. It is often said, that the retired life of a man of letters has but little in it that is calculated to attract the attention and awaken the interest of readers. We hear biographers making this an excuse for the poverty of their narrations; but how little justice there is in the assertion, any one can tell who has even a trifling acquaintance with literary history. What is there in the life of the greatest warrior that ever lived, half so attractive, as the private and happy retirement of the poet and scholar? We may indeed gaze upon him, whose life has been spent in scenes of bloodshed, with a deep curiosity and a dreadful interest; we may read the history of his adventures, with a thrilling excitement; but when we have done, what is left for our contemplation? Our memory is crowded with a confused recollection of battles, massacres, sieges, and wars: we have read of cities pillaged and wrapt in flames; of villages destroyed; of unnumbered acts of cruelty and rapine; unnumbered instances of murder and desolation. But we have found in all this, little to animate our hopes and raise our confidence in human virtue. We have found in it but little to console us with the prospect of human improvement and human happiness. Such things are interesting, it is true, but they are so because they are exciting. There are thousands in every community, who flock around the gallows, erected for the execution of an unfortunate criminal, and watch the scene, with a deep and thrilling interest; and there are thousands, too, who feel an enthusiastic excitement, when they listen to the tales of warlike achievement.

But there is no one, who does not contemplate with satisfaction, the silent but useful life of him who spends his days in retirement, that he may improve, please, and instruct, not only his contemporaries, but all future generations.

But how much is our interest in the biographical sketch increased, when it comes from the hand of him who is the subject of it? He, who writes the life of another, can only judge of the character of his hero, from external circumstances; the secret motives which influenced his actions, and the secret causes that formed his character, can be estimated, only by the individual himself. Prejudice, friendship, or enmity, is apt to give a wrong coloring to the narrative of the biographer. But when a man sits down soberly, to give the world an account of his own life, he will, if he is an honest man, suffer nothing to escape him, but a fair and candid statement of the truth. He will set forth, clearly and explicitly, the motives of actions, which would be perplexing and unsatisfactory to any second person. He can explain the course his character followed, in its formation; he can detail the circumstances, that first gave a peculiar bent to the direction of his mind; he can describe the gradual development of his intellectual powers, with a graphic vividness, beyond the power of any other man. No one ever read the memoirs of Göthe, whithout feelings of pleasure and satisfaction, and a sort of friendship for their venerable author. The clearness with which he draws forth, from the stores of his memory, the events of his early life, the happy and easy manner, in which he describes the progress of his mind, the candor with which he relates, even the follies of his youth, are irresistibly fascinating, to every unprejudiced reader. The reminiscences of Butler, that "veteran scholar," form one of the most interesting volumes, that have of late years been issued from the British press. But of all the works of this kind, that have ever been published, perhaps there is not a more admirable specimen, than the life of the great Italian tragedian, Alfieri, by himself. It is an ornament to the beautiful literature, of which it is a part, and ranks not among the least of this distinguished author's writings. His tragedies are great and imposing monuments of their author's genius, but if we wish to gain a correct and vivid impression of his character, we must go to the picture, which his own hand has

drawn. These examples are enough to show the use of such writings; and it is to be hoped, that men of eminence, in every department of life, will be more ready, than they yet have been, to gratify the world with correct and living delineations of their own intellectual existence. P. Q.

GENIUS OF SHERIDAN.

Some apology might seem necessary, for offering to the reader any remarks upon the genius of a man so well known, so celebrated, as Sheridan. Distinguished as one of the brightest ornaments of the British Parliament, admired for his amiable qualities, as well as for his splendid talents, his fame has long ago reached this continent. His eloquence has been heard across the Atlantic, and it speaks its own praises; no fame can be added to that which he has already acquired, by our humble attempt to point out the remarkable features of his mind; but to us it appears, that although we can only unite with thousands in our admiration of his powers, and can add nothing to his glory, we may receive much benefit from contemplating his character. By the habit of reflecting upon the career of the great and good men who have gone before us, we may make great improvement in our own character. It is by viewing the mind as it ought to be, and not as in too many instances it is, that we form in ourselves the desire of imitating the noble specimens of man in his native goodness; the more we dwell upon the beauties of virtue or upon the charms of genius, the more shall we desire to be like their possessors; in the same way as we become more capable of enjoying the finest productions of art, the more we contemplate the works of the first masters. And these are the effects which may be produced by thinking upon the genius, the greatness of such men as Sheridan. His genius did not early discover itself; when a boy he was idle and apparently dull. Many, in the school boy pursuits, outstripped him, to whom they afterwards looked up with veneration; and it is a consoling reflection to a vast number, that this man, whose talents were afterwards so conspicuous in so many different ways, could be made nothing of when a child. Was his genius slumbering, that it might come out with more brilliancy

in after years, or was he in reality the stupid child he seemed? It appears that some persons did actually suspect in the course of of his boyish days, that he had rather more talent than he was generally thought to possess, but no one could discern in him the marks of that genius which was one day to astonish the world. He appears to have been overwhelmed by a dislike to exertion, which prevented him from making much proficiency in those studies which he afterwards felt the want of so much, and this feeling seems to have attended him through life. In his first attempts to prepare a work for press, he was continually disappointing those with whom he was engaged, by this habit of procrastination. We find him beginning when quite young to engage in the pursuits of literature; yet he was disappointed in his first appearance before the public; the translation which he engaged in with one of his friends, though it was perhaps well performed, was not favorably received. But the genius of Sheridan was soon to show itself in original productions. It was perhaps well for the future fame of Sheridan, that he had now a new stimulus to urge him on, and oblige him to bring into action those powers which had hitherto slumbered. Deprived of assistance from his father, (who had become offended at him and even hostile towards him, on account of his hasty marriage with a being whom he almost adored,) and depending upon himself for support, he overcame the dislike to exertion, which he had always felt, and his powers now began to appear. It is not improbable, that the low opinion entertained of him by so many, was another motive which prompted him to show the talent which he felt that he possessed. He made no idle boast of what he could do, he made no pretensions to genius, but went quietly to work, and produced the first opera in the English language. His Duenna certainly deserves this character: none can read it without being amused and delighted. The scence is well chosen. The delightful climate of Spain is well fitted for the serenade; and as we wander with the lovers through the streets of the city, we acknowledge, that the beautiful nights of that land, over which the paradise of the mussulmen was supposed to be, are well fitted to inspire the musician and draw forth his sweetest melody. The plot of the piece is interesting, and the flashes of wit which appear throughout, the

ludicrous characters which are introduced, and the beautiful close render it indeed worthy of the fame it has acquired. Sheridan had now found a field where his genius could display itself, and he did not leave it till he had acquired for himself a reputation which will last as long as theatrical representations continue to be attractive. His next great work was the 'School for Scandal;' this he produced at the age of twenty-six. It is surprising to observe the labor which Sheridan bestowed upon his writings; and this appears to us as another proof of his strength of mind. The pretended genius is ashamed to labor, and the idea, that genius supplies the place of industry and patience, is but too common. Sheridan made no pretentions to genius; he seems to have had a feeling of distrust in his powers, which induced him to bestow the greatest pains upon all his writings before publishing them. His School for Scandal has been called the best comedy in the language, and the labor bestowed upon it is almost inconceivable. His last effort for the stage was the Critic. This farce is too well known to be treated of at length here; it will sustain the reputation which Sheridan had acquired by his dramatic writings.

We are now to follow him in a greater pursuit. We are to see him the first in a path so entirely different from that which he had hitherto followed, that we should hardly believe that one man could become so distinguished in both; but the genius of Sheridan was not exclusive. Though great, it was not one of those untractable, unwieldy geniuses which is only fit for one thing. He could turn his talents to any thing he chose to engage in, and his reputation is the greater on that account. We are now to see him engaging in a political life, the friend of Fox and of Burke, and their rival in eloquence. We see him at first unwilling to try his powers in this new scene, sitting a silent observer of the transactions of the House, and meeting with little success in his first attempt. But we cannot help admiring his determination to go on, in spite of the apparent obstacles which surrounded him. His speeches were carefully prepared beforehand, for he dared not, like Burke, depend upon his genius at the moment, to supply him with those expressions which produced such an effect upon his audience. Fortune favored him, by bringing up a case which might well command all the powers of man. Sheridan was

soon called upon to support the charges against Warren Hastings, the governor of the British possessions in India. Here was a glorious opportunity for the display of his talents. There was brought to the bar, a man who had rendered himself odious by his crimes; a man against whom the heart of every good person would revolt. The mourning of the victims of his cruelty had reached the shores of England, and the most gifted of her sons were engaged, to make good the charges against the tyrant. It fell to Sheridan's lot to be the chief speaker upon this occasion; and his eloquence was such as had never before been heard. The closing words of his great speech in the Westminster hall, are a fair specimen of the eloquence of Sheridan. "Let the truth appear and our cause is gained. It is this, I conjure your lordships, for your own honor, for the honor of the nation, for the honor of human nature now entrusted to your care,—it is this duty that the Commons of England, speaking through us, claim at your hands. They exhort you to it, by every thing that calls sublimely on the heart of man, by the Majesty of that Justice which this bold man has libelled, by the wide fame of your own tribunal, by the sacred pledge by which you swear in the solemn hour of decision, knowing that that decision will then bring you the highest reward that ever blest the heart of man, the consciousness of having done the greatest act of mercy for the world, that the earth has ever yet received from any hand but Heaven—My lords, I have done." Thus did this Cicero hurl his thunders against the Verres of his age. His eloquence was overpowering, and the praises bestowed upon him by his cotemporaries were the tribute which they could not but pay to the master spirit who was dictating to the judges the true meaning of justice. Nor were the walks of poetry unexplored by Sheridan. Some beautiful pieces addressed to his wife show that he had a genius for poetry too, and they show, what is better still, the excellence of his heart. The great talents and striking virtues of Sheridan should throw a veil over some faults in his character; the infirmities of this great genius were fewer than of many who do not so well merit the name, and the weaknesses of his character should be overlooked, when we think of what was at first expected of him, and what the event proved him to be.

O. U.

POETRY.

THE ORPHAN.

Majestically from the strand
On heaving waves the bark moved on,
While dimly sank the distant land,
Till its last fading trace was gone.

Still fancy saw its outline there,
And when she could no longer cheat
The mind, still eyes would turn them, where
Hearts, fond hearts were lingering yet.

The grief of some was wild and deep,
And the reft heart spoke out its woe,
While others turned away to weep,
For tears would still unbidden flow.

Their native land, their fathers' home
Had sank beneath their ocean path,
And they had left its halls to roam,
And dare the ocean in its wrath.

I too have felt despair entwine
Around my heart its withering fingers,
What griefs, what hopeless griefs are mine,
When the faint shade no longer lingers,

Gathering 'round my native isle.
Aye! I have striven with despair,
When all was wave and sky, the while
I gazed, and thought my isle was there.

Amidst that sorrowing group was one,
All heedless of the sickening wave,

An orphan boy,—and hope seemed flown,
And no hope left him but the grave.

There is an agony of soul—
Voiceless and deep—tears mark it not,
Nor yet the deeply poisoned bowl,
Where other griefs are soon forgot.

I 've seen it in the mother, bending
O'er her infant's early blight,
When dust with its own dust was blending,
And coming life seemed one long night.

I 've marked it in her woe-worn brow,
Her eye soiled by no griefless tear;
While men, whose garb spoke all their woe,
Were mockery to grief and her.

Such grief I 've seen, unheard, but felt,
Where man has been estranged from heaven,
And guilt in penitence hath knelt,
With scarce a hope to be forgiven.

Such was his grief, a tearless eye
Told, earth for him had not a joy,
Or e'er a friend to soothe him, nigh
The lonely and heart-stricken boy.

The world can never know a sorrow
Embittered like the orphan's lot;
If fortune frown, its tears, the morrow
Will see in fleeting joy forgot.

In the wide world he stood alone,
Amidst the throng of all earth-born,
And found, to solace him, not one,
Cursed by cold pity, or by scorn.

The bitterest grief that earth can know,
'Midst sorrows of its mingled state,
Was his,—to bear its keenest woe,
And feel that he was desolate.

He looked upon the waste of sea,
And felt him desolate,—and while
His thoughts were o'er its waves away,
He sung of sorrow and his isle.

K.

[To be continued.]

HOPE.

"Dark e'en at noontide is our mortal sphere,
But let us hope, to doubt is to rebel,
Let us exult in hope, that all shall yet be well."

Beattie.

What gives to man his hours of bliss on earth,
What cheers in sorrow and gives zest to mirth,
What lights his path of life with joyous ray
And guides him onward in his toilsome way?
In times of darkest danger fraught with woe,
What nerves the Patriot's arm to meet the foe,
Renews his courage in the deadly fight,
And fires his nerves with schemes of glory bright?
Is it not Hope, that angel from above,
Sent by kind heaven in mercy and in love,
A gracious boon when cares of life molest,
A rich inheritance to make us blest?
In every land, in every breast it reigns,
From India's zone to Greenland's icy plains;
Alike on all it sheds its genial beams,
Alike to all with generous comfort teems.

In foreign climes, far from his native shore
Compelled to wander and return no more,
The exile's heart would sink beneath the weight
Of grief and sorrow that attends his fate,
Did not sweet Hope create the fond belief,
That he may yet find pardon and relief,
Revisit yet again, that land so dear,
Again, the voice of wife and children hear.
The wretched slave of Afric's sandy waste,
Torn from his home by fortune's rudest blast,
Doomed, in the polished regions of the west,
To spend his days, still nurtures in his breast
The fires of Hope; the bright, delusive dream
Of happier moments, that may yet redeem
His hours of toil, of woe and suffering past,
And prays for freedom, e'er he breathes his last.
Thy smile, sweet Hope, can light the darkest brow,
Though deep the wound, a cordial balm bestow;
Pleasure itself, owes all its charms to thee,
Celestial partner of the sacred Three.
Thy beams effulgent, joy and peace impart,
Dispel our fears and gladden every heart;
Rich, copious streams from thy clear fountain flow,
Best, greatest source of happiness below.
Like that kind star, which sheds its light around
To guide the sailor o'er the deep profound,
Hope, like its constant ray, shines ever bright,
Points to the future, and gives pure delight.

T.

NIOBE.

The bow's sharp twang has died upon the air,—
The winged shafts their fatal course have sped;—
Injured Latona stands indignant there,
Gazing in haughty silence on the dead.

She stands—exulting sternly in their fate,—
Around her burning eye-balls madly roll;
There,—the glowing fires of malignant hate
Mark the fierce passions raging in her soul.

The flush of pride upon the mother's brow
And lovely cheek, in livid faintness dies;
Thus twilight's dimness follows on the glow
In which the setting sun arrays the skies.

What agonizing pangs her mind molest,
And rend her heart-strings at this dreadful hour!
Can aught assuage the tumult in her breast,
And banish sorrow's life-destroying power?

'Reft of a mother's hope—a mother's pride,—
Still can she journey on her weary way?
Still can her hours in rosy pleasure glide,
And her life steal in joy and mirth away?

Ah no! fate severs the sole ties that bind
Her heart's affections to this earthly spot;
No longer hope or solace can she find,—
Distress and anguish frown upon her lot.

She saw the blushing bud of promise rear,
In conscious loveliness, its beauteous head;
In riper bloom she saw the flower appear,
And its bright leaves to fortune's breezes spread.

She sees it now,—borne through the troubled air
On the dark pinions of the withering gale ;—
Thus hope too oft is blasted by despair,—
And joy's glad pæan ends in sorrow's wail.

L.

THE TEARS OF A KING.

The monarch sat on his rock-built throne
By the wet sands of the sea,
Begirt with all the purple pomp
Of Eastern Sovereignty.

The shore was dark with human forms ;
Unnumbered hosts were there ;
The welkin rang with the gladsome shouts
That burst upon his ear.

Their polished mail and jewelled helms
Gleamed with a dazzling light ;
And their plumes, as they drooped their graceful heads,
Seemed a sea of waving white.

The thousand ships of that mighty king,
In gallant state swept by ;
And their streamers danced in the fair sunshine
Of a bright blue Grecian sky.

The monarch felt a monarch's pride
In his swelling bosom glow ;
While glorious thoughts with eagle wings
Came o'er his lordly brow.

He thought of Glory's laurel wreath,
Of kneeling fettered kings ;
His ear already heard the rush,
Of Conquest's crimson wings.

But soon a darkening shade of grief,
On that speaking face appears;
And the eye, that flashed with living fire,
Is wet with gushing tears.

He wept to think that his countless hosts
Were hastening to the grave;
That the cold green turf would shortly wrap
His noble and his brave.

"I look around, all speaks of life
In its fresh and morning bloom;
But the goal, that all are hastening to,
Is the dark and noisome tomb.

From ghastly death's remorseless grasp,
No human power can save;
His giant arm strikes down alike,
The satrap and the slave.

And I, the lord of half a world,
The king of kings, must die;
The meanest slave in my broad domains
In as wide a grave shall lie."

G.

THE SOLDIER'S BURIAL.

The war shout and the cannon-roar,
From the red field are heard no more;
Hushed is the clarion's martial strain;—
Gloomy and still the battle plain;
Still—for the dead alone are here;
And gloomy—'t is the soldier's bier.

The silver moon with mellow light
Softens the dusky shades of night;

At this lone hour the conquered come ;—
Not with the music of the drum,
And piercing fife's shrill melody,
And silken banners waving high,
And all the pageantry of power,
Approach they at this silent hour ;—
Nor yet dismayed—in coward fear
Lest the proud foe be lurking near.
With fearless though dejected heart,
They come to act affection's part—
To tear the vulture from his prey,
And the gaunt she-wolf drive away ;
The relics of their chief to save,
For the last honors—and a grave.

It is a service where the soul
Recoils from Custom's light control :
No priest his supplicating prayer,
And vows to heaven offers there ;
They raise no monumental bust,
They place no urn to hold his dust,
No drum's deep notes of woe are pealing—
The hour is one of voiceless feeling !
The speaking tear his eulogy—
His requiem, a soldier's sigh.—

They give him to his mother earth !
In the proud hour of glory's birth.
The helmet from his blood-stained brow,—
The sword his right hand grasped but now—
The plume that danced amid the host,
As the white wave on ocean tost—
Lie by the lately dreaded one ;—
The task is o'er—the work is done.

O.